proposed to be provided in near future are Dispur, Rangia, Karimganj and Mariani in Assam.

Conversion of Kolar-Chkkaballapur MG Line

3909. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH: Will the Minister of RAIL WAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether conversion of Kolar-Chikkaballapur MG Rail line into BG is pending consideration with the Railways and the project has not been included in the Budgets during the last three years;

(b) if so, whether the matter was considered for inclusion in the Budget 2001-2002, if not, the reasons therefor; and

(c) by when the proposal is likely to be considered, in view of the heavy traffic on this route?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (c) A survey for conversion of the narrow gauge rail line from Kolar to Chickkballapur was conducted in 2000. As per the survey report the cost of conversion of the 87 km. long line was assessed as Rs.53.45 crore with negative rate of return. Due to unremunerative nature of the line and constraint of resources, it has not been found feasible to consider the proposal for the present.

Helplessness of Railway about safety factors

3910. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA:
SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is fact that, as per a recent press report, a Senior Railway Board Member (Traffic) has gone on record to say that due to shortage of funds, safety factors are getting squeezed, as maintenance and replacements are not carried out in time;

(b) whether it is also a fact that some statistics quoted that 76 per cent accidents are due to derailments and human errors and there are 2000 rail fractures and 3000 weld failures per year and the Railways do not have the means to check these faults, and are thereby unable to take preventive action; and

(c) if so, what are Government's views on these facts?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Implementation of safety measures and replacement of over-aged assets depend upon availability of funds. Railway Safety Review Committee in Part - I of their report had recommended that Central Government should give a one time grant of Rs. 15,000/- crores to Railways to wipe out arrears of replacement of over-aged assets.

While Indian Railways have not received any specific grant from Central Government as yet, efforts have been made to suitably enhance the outlay of safety related items in the budget. Similarly Railways are progressively implementing safety measures within availability of funds and resources.

(b) and (c) Yes Sir, around 3/4th of accidents are due to derailments and 2/3rd of these are due to human errors of railway staff and others.

Rail fractures and weld failures take place because rails are subjected to continuous stresses besides dynamic impact of moving wheels. To overcome this problem, instructions from Board's level have been issued to Zonal Railways which include augmentation in services of ultrasonic rail flaw detector machines for checking rail fractures. Track is being maintained for safe running of trains at prescribed speeds.

Apart from this, following measures have been introduced to ensure sturdiness of track and its proper maintenance.

(i) 52 kg. rails are being replaced with heavier rail sections of 60 kg. depending upon traffic requirement.

(ii) Fish plated joints are being replaced with welded joints wherever feasible.

(iii) Steel/wooden sleepers are being replaced with concrete sleepers.

(iv) More and more track is being brought under mechanised maintenance gradually.

(v) Quality of rails have been improved.

(vi) In service testing of rails through ultrasonic flaw detecting machine is being done to detect defects in rail before they grow to failure size.

To avoid accidents due to human error, modern methods of training are being utilized for imparting training in Zonal Training Schools. Periodic safety drives are also launched to test the alertness of staff.

Gauge conversion from Samastipur to Saharsa

†3911. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any proposal to convert narrow gauge lines from Samastipur to Saharsa into broad gauge is under consideration of Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir. However, the lines are meter gauge and not narrow gauge.

(b) Work on gauge conversion of Mansi-Saharsa-Dhauram Madhepur section is in progress.

Gauge conversion of Samastipur-Khagaria section was included in the Railway Budget with the proviso that work would be taken up after obtaining necessary clearances. Action for obtaining their clearances has been initiated.

(c) Does not arise.

Handing over the ticket distribution to private sector

†3912. SHRI KAPIL SIBAL:
SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN':

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.